

In Memoriam

Aaron Joseph Brownstein
1932-1986

Aaron Brownstein was a scientist with an unwavering devotion to the highest standards of rigor and clarity, a vigorous champion of behaviorism, an inspiring teacher, an imaginative academic leader, and a warm, active, fun-loving person. He died suddenly and unexpectedly on April 12, 1986 while performing with a clogging group that he and his wife, Daisy, regularly danced with. By his death, behavior analysis lost one of its most perceptive critical thinkers and one of its most ardent advocates.

Since 1968, Aaron had been Professor of Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). After receiving his B.A. degree from the City College of New York in 1953, he went to the University of Missouri where he received his M.A. degree in 1957 and his Ph.D. in 1961. At Missouri he was a student of Melvin Marx and a close colleague of Al Hillix. Before coming to UNCG, Aaron taught at Florida State University and at Arizona State University. He was brought to UNCG by Bob Eason, also a Missouri Ph.D., who had just come to UNCG as Department Head with a mandate to develop a Ph.D. program.

At the time of his death, Aaron was serving as the editor-elect of *The Behavior Analyst*. He was looking forward to becoming the editor with a mixture of excitement and deep humility because he believed that *The Behavior Analyst* had an extremely important role to play in shaping the direction of our research, scholarship, and application. Although he was optimistic about the long-term prospects for behavior analysis, he was troubled by what seemed to him an increasing willingness within our field to proliferate analytical terms and concepts without due regard for assessing their necessity or their relationships with founda-

tion concepts. He had hoped, as editor, to be able to contribute to the positive development of our field by emphasizing rigor and clarity in our scientific concepts and practices.

He served our field often over the years, with great effectiveness and modesty. Because of his well-deserved reputation as a penetrating, but constructive, critic, he was a frequent reviewer of manuscripts and grant proposals. In recent years, he was a member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, *The Psychological Record*, and *The Behavior Analyst*. In addition, he served on the Board of Directors of the Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, on the Advisory Board of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies, and on the Publications Board of the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis. During 1981-82, he was co-chair of Division 25's program committee for the APA convention, and he was to serve as Program Coordinator for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior section of the Association for Behavior Analysis. He was especially proud that the Southeastern Association for Behavior Analysis (SEABA) was flourishing. Aaron created SEABA, and he did so almost single-handedly. To get the organization started, he stuffed envelopes, scouted possible convention sites, put the first program together, and did all the hundreds of things that such an enterprise requires. Characteristically, he did it all so efficiently and unobtrusively that it was easy not to notice how completely SEABA was the product of his imagination and energy. But Aaron was not much concerned about being recognized for his efforts; the important thing for him was that the annual meetings be stimulating, challenging, and fun.

Throughout his career as teacher and

scholar, Aaron was intensely concerned with conceptual issues. He loved to debate issues and would do so just about any time or place. At home or at conventions, Aaron always was at the center of high-spirited discussions. Although he was an incredibly astute and skillful debater, he was great fun to argue with because of his wonderful good humor, his intellectual vigor and integrity, and his total lack of arrogance or condescension. He was as lively and uncompromising in his discussions with students and junior colleagues as he was with senior-level colleagues. As a consequence, he helped students come to know that their ideas were worthy of being taken seriously. He clearly cared for and enjoyed ideas and, by example, helped others come to care for and enjoy ideas too.

Aaron was especially concerned that the rigor and clarity of our analytic concepts be maintained when we approach complex human phenomena. His collaborative papers with Joel Greenspoon on "awareness in verbal conditioning" and on "psychotherapy from the standpoint of a behaviorist" (Greenspoon & Brownstein, 1967a, 1967b) exemplify this concern early in Aaron's career. These interests continued in his collaborative work with Eve Segal in the early 1970s on the development of complex repertoires in young children. More recent examples include his work with Steve Hayes and students on instructional control of operant behavior in humans (e.g., Hayes, Brownstein, Zettle, Rosenfarb, & Korn, 1986; see also, Brownstein & Shull, 1985).

Over this same period of time, Aaron maintained a very active basic research laboratory (pigeons and rats). His first priority always was to encourage the education and independence of his students and, as a consequence, he supported projects on a wide variety of basic topics including concurrent schedules, adjunctive behavior, Pavlovian contingencies (autoshaping), and complex conditional stimulus control. Some former students have continued work begun in Aaron's laboratory and shaped by his incisive, critical analyses (e.g., Peter Balsam and Cora Lee Wetherington).

He was a valued and respected member of the UNCG faculty. He believed fervently that the University's first priority should be to support the education of its students, and he could be counted on as an eloquent spokesman for that view. In recognition of his experience and values, he was elected by the UNCG faculty to be UNCG's faculty representative to the UNC system's Faculty Assembly where he served as Chairman of the Planning and Programs Committee. Also, he recently served as Acting Assistant Dean of the Graduate School. In 1985, he was selected as one of three faculty representatives from the 16-campus UNC system to serve on the Advisory Committee to the Board of Governors' Search Committee for President of the UNC system.

In recognition of his many professional contributions, Aaron was elected Fellow of Division 25 of the American Psychological Association in 1984. Aaron will be remembered for his intellectual qualities: his challenging and good humored debating, his probing questions, the values he instilled in his students, his intellectual integrity, and his critical analyses of language use. He will be remembered also for his personal qualities: his zest for living, his delightful stories, his gracious hospitality, his glorious health-food concoctions, and his wonderful generosity. Colleagues and students feel fortunate to have known him.

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